



Intra-sectoral use of resources

Policy

Recfishwest supports the equitable sharing throughout the recreational sector of all common property aquatic resources. Recreational fishers in each fishery should be provided with access to their sustainable share of available aquatic resources. However, variable community expectations require the careful consideration of input controls and the implementation of fishing rules in order to maximise community return from individual fishery resources. As a result, it is likely that, in some instances, fishing rules may favour some groups within the sector over others.

Generally Recfishwest will support a conservation approach to management, and will investigate intra-sectoral management options provided the benefits accrue to the recreational sector and enhance the overall recreational fishing experience.

Purpose

As part of a range of significant management changes in recent years, access levels to some wild fish stocks are required to be more thoughtfully and carefully allocated within the recreational sector. These measures are generally supported by the recreational fishing community as appropriate conservation measures, but this finer level of management now requires that equity and fairness of access and allocation is carefully considered within the sector.

It is a widely accepted premise that some skilled anglers regularly catch their bag limits, whereas most (less skilful) anglers do not. With the introduction of Integrated Fisheries Management (IFM), and subsequent associated resource allocations, Recfishwest believes it is important that all anglers have the opportunity to access a fair share of the sector's allocations. This reflects social equity.

It has been identified that recreational fishers are a very diverse group whose fishery expectations and requirements varied widely (Kearney 2000). Although this has not adequately been recognised to-date by marine and fisheries managers, Recfishwest believes that each of these various recreational user groups should all be accommodated.

Background

Since its inception in 1997 Recfishwest has endeavored to ensure that all recreational fishers are provided fair and equal access to their portion of the shared Common Property resource. This is not

always possible given the variable effectiveness of some fishing methods and the range of varying stock structures required by different fishing groups.

Previously these twelve groups who access fish stocks have been identified (Kearney et al 2001);

1. licensed commercial fishers;
2. unlicensed operators who sell their catch;
3. accumulators, who use large catches as food for extended groups or for barter;
4. competitors, including those to whom the capture of more fish than others is primary;
5. hunters, motivated by the chase and the kill;
6. sportspersons, to whom the challenge, the skill, the odds, the adrenalin rush and the satisfaction of a job well done are important, but so is a feed of fish;
7. recreational enthusiasts, to whom the outing is most important but for whom a feed of fish is still a prize;
8. social fishers, to whom the camaraderie and fellowship are most important;
9. adventurers, who like the hunter savor the chase, but not the kill, and release their catch;
10. lovers of open space, who if they do have a line in the water, do so purely to justify being outdoors;
11. observers, particularly underwater enthusiasts;
12. preservationists, who are there to prevent change.

For example social fishers may measure a successful day by catching a feed of fish for the family, whereas a keen sportsperson may only want to catch a single large specimen and then release it. The ideal fish stock structure for these two groups would be quite different with the social fisher requiring plentiful numbers of legal size fish while the sportsperson may simply want larger specimens to be available. Recfishwest recognizes that the limitations of the fish resource preclude meeting all the objectives of different groups; but it is important to distribute the sustainable share as fairly as possible between different recreational fishers.

In some circumstances intra-fishery resource allocation is effected through fisheries regulations (snare only marron fisheries), or via licensing arrangements (recreational boat fishing license) which primarily restricts access to most demersal species to license holders, or marine park zonings (benthic protection areas) which exclude fishers targeting demersal species for food.

It is in this complex environment that Recfishwest provides advice to government, which would retain equitable access to aquatic resources across all user groups.

Kearny, R.E., 2001. Fisheries property rights and recreational/commercial conflict: implications of policy developments in Australia and New Zealand. *Marine Policy* 25:49–51.